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ABSTRACT

Old educational paradigms may not be the best approach to reconfiguring educational programs for the 21st century. Demographic projections for school-age children for the 21st century reveal an ethnically and linguistically rich population of students. The educational system that has historically existed in the United States was neither created by the families of the immigrant populations nor driven by the goals of providing a multiethnic/multicultural education for all students. There is a lack of professors in schools of education who are trained to be sensitive to the needs of ethno-linguistic minority children. As the minority student population grows, the preservice and inservice teacher population remains white. There is also a distinct lack of ethnic diversity in the promotion of ethnic minorities into the ranks of tenured and full professor status. This is a problem for future teachers since it is difficult to produce qualified, caring new teachers within a system that does not value and promote ethnic and linguistic diversity. This paper shows that the student undergraduate enrollments in the California State University System (CSU) for the year 2000 have followed the trend in the general population: the white student population continues to shrink as ethnic minorities expand to become the "Majority" of students. By contrast, there is a lack of ethnic composition for professors teaching in a typical School of Education, and there is a distinct lack of ethnic diversity in the promotion of minorities into the ranks of tenured or full professor status. (SM)

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MULTICULTURAL CONCERNS: A FOUNDATIONS PERSPECTIVE AND DISCUSSION FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

PAPER PRESENTED AT THE

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CARING, COMPETENT EDUCATORS:
A COMMON GOAL, A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

MARCH 2, 2001

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MULTICULTURAL CONCERNS: A FOUNDATIONS PERSPECTIVE AND DISCUSSION FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

When we stop to ponder the future of education in the United States there are several issues for which a historical examination of the foundations of education approach are less than illuminating. Although American Educational History is replete with great minds, great theorists, and some well known "schools of educational practice" there is a dearth of information on the issues that now confront us. As educators, as professors in the field of teacher education, as members of national associations dedicated to educational research we must be concerned that old paradigms may not be the best approach or even the appropriate starting point for attempts to reconfigure educational programs for the 21st century.

A cursory review of any of the demographic projections for school age children in the United States for the twenty first century reveals a much more ethnically and/or linguistically rich population of students. This ethnic and linguistic richness will exceed the previous ethnic/linguistic high point that was experienced during the first decade of the twentieth century in the United States. A closer look at these projections reveals that the majority of these students will be monolingual Spanish speaking students, with Asian language speakers in the second position. How will the intertwined issues of language and ethnicity be approached? A glance at the national news will reveal that not one but two states, California and Arizona, have as of January 1, 2001, attempted to outlaw or severely restrict the delivery of educational services to non-English dominant students in their home language, i. e. bilingual educational services. How can this return to practices that were attempted in the 1920's during the height of isolationism in U.S. history be explained. It may not be coincidental that the first legislated assaults on the use of home language as a medium for the delivery of educational services in the 1920's followed on the heels of what up until now had

been (1900-1910) the decade of the highest rates of immigration that had been experienced in the United States. It is an inescapable conclusion that the reaction to large influxes of non-English dominant immigrants is to attempt to curtail their access to education via their native languages. In the mid 1960's following the first major revamping of the immigration and naturalization codes, that allowed for the immigration of people from non Europeans countries in the twentieth century, we immediately began to experience legal challenges to the ways local school districts were choosing to provide services to these non or limited English speaking students.

It can be no surprise to informed persons that the educational system that has historical existed within the United States was neither created by the families of our current immigrant populations nor was it ever driven by the goals of providing a multiethnic/multilingual education for immigrant or non immigrant student populations. Rather in fact, a review of popular writings at the turn of the twentieth century envisioned educators, the classroom teacher, and the school as the instruments by which all immigrants would be homogenized into "real" Americans who spoke only English and cherished the same values as their Anglo Saxon neighbors. The inhumane consequences and futility of this effort could have been predicted by a study of the effects of the "Indian Boarding School" experience on Native American students and their ethnic communities. But it must be that this information is either irrelevant to educational policy makers or it is a part of educational history and research that is not widely known.

Another trend that is being ignored in teacher training is the lack of professors in schools of education who may be trained to be sensitive to the needs of ehno-lingustic minority children. Table 1, below, shows that the student undergraduate enrollments

in the California State University System (CSU, year 2000) are following the trend in the general population. In just a few years, the White student population will continue to shrink, as ethnic minorities (largely Latino and Asian groups) expand to become the "majority" of the students at CSU. By contrast, Table 2 depicts the lack of ethnic composition for professors teaching in a typical School of Education. A survey of this typical school of education faculty found that in terms of major field of preparation none of the majority faculty members even the level of training in culture and linguistic areas that are now required of all teacher education candidates in the state of California. A review of their professional association memberships revealed that only two of the majority faculty members are affiliated with professional associations that have as one of their foci either cultural or linguistic diversity training and research issues. Conversely all of the Mexican/Latino and Black faculty have held positions of leadership either at the state, national, or even international level in these same types of professional organizations. The issue clearly is how well can faculty teach education students about linguistic and diversity issues in educational settings when they have not studied these areas and most of them are not actively involved in organizations that could provide research and support for knowledge development in these areas.

Table 3 shows a distinct lack of ethic diversity in the promotion of ethic minorities into the ranks of tenured and full professor status. The number of qualified faculty to teach in the CLAD (Cross Cultural Linguistic Academic Development) area and the reward systems for qualified CLAD faculty at this CSU system do not seem to coincide with the California Commission on Teacher Credential mandate for teacher credentialing. How can qualified, caring new teacher be produced by a system that does not value and promote ethnic and linguistic diversity. How can we expect new teacher to be competent in ways that their education faculty is not? How can we point

the finger at school system that do not have teachers of color when our institution of high education have not set standard? What is each of our institutions and associations doing to improve the quality of education in American for all children? Without clear leadership and direction colleges of education will continue to "be concerned" about the quality of education but will not move beyond rhetoric. The gauntlet of preparing ourselves with new research, methodologies, and pedagogies would be the first step toward being more responsive to the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity that surrounds us.

As Freire (1998) said, "We are subject to genetic, cultural, social, class, sexual, and historical conditionings that mark us profoundly and that constitutes for us a center of reference." So we are challenged to become caring, competent educators who consider everyone's education are responsibility. We must examine our individual reference points and expand our reference points continually to be able to meet the continuing challenges of educating all students equally well. It is imperative that all the walls and barriers are torn down and all of humanity is celebrated.

Table1: Percent CSU-wide Students

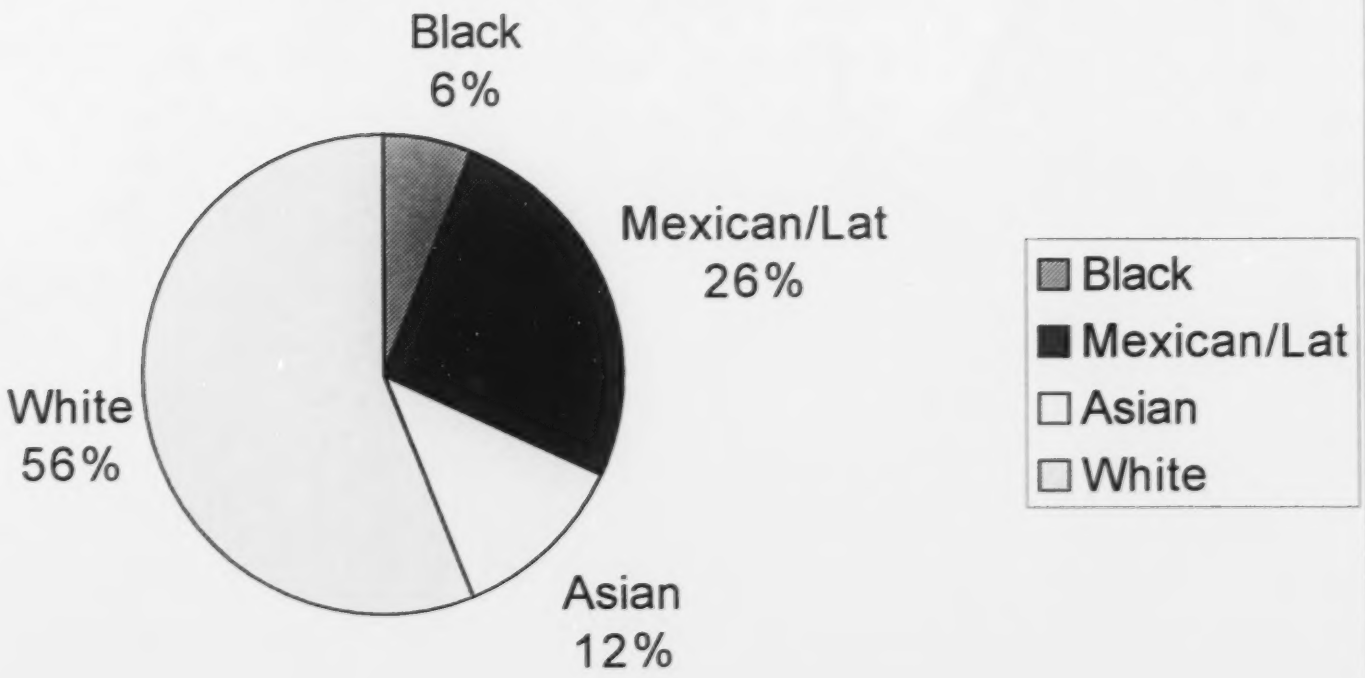


Table2: Percent CSU Ed. Faculty typical campus

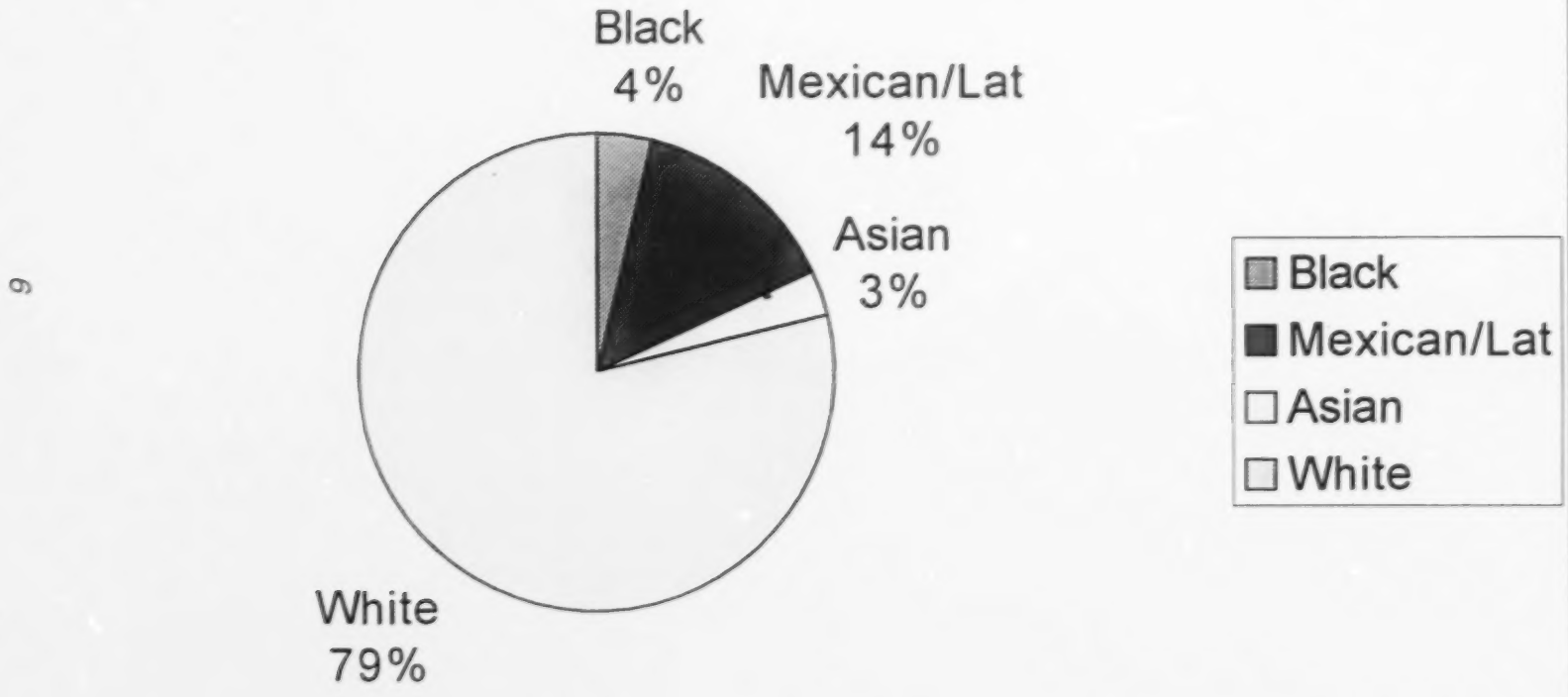
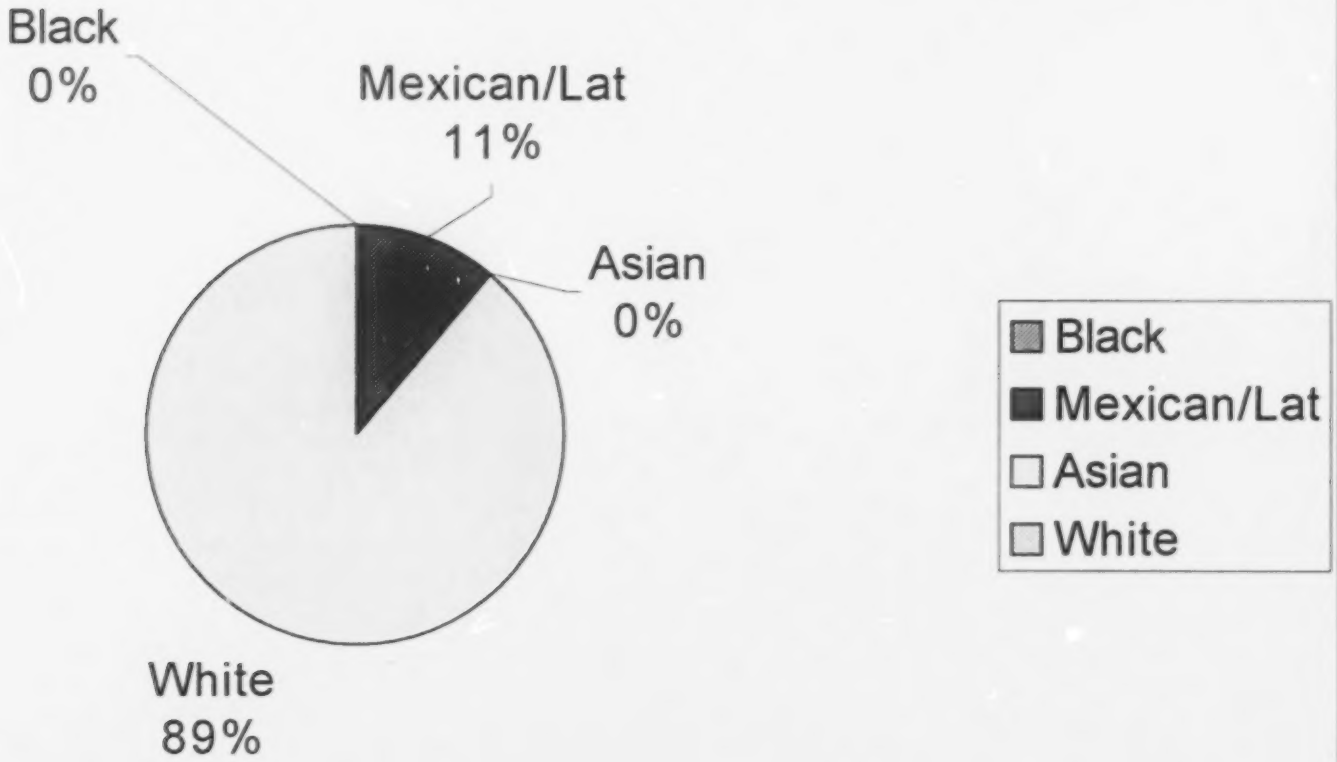


Table3: Percent CSU Tenured Ed. Faculty typical campus



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